

## **I. RESPONSIBLE STATE AGENCY**

The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) within the Arkansas Department of Human Services (EIN 6007389) is the state agency administering the Title IV-E and other Foster Care Programs. This Division will be responsible for the administration of the Independent Living Program (ILP). The Independent Living Program provides services to two (2) categories of clients:

1. Foster care youth, IV-E eligible and Non IV-E eligible, between the ages of sixteen to twenty-one (16-21) participating in high school, secondary school or an equivalent technical program.
2. Former foster care youth up to the age of twenty-one (21) are eligible for post discharge services if the youth was in foster care after his or her sixteenth (16th) birthday.

The Department of Human Services/Division of Children and Family Services/Independent Living Grant Program will cooperate in national/regional evaluations of programs implemented to achieve the purposes and goals of the Arkansas IV-E Independent Living Program.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES THAT THE STATE PLANS TO CARRY OUT WITH ALLOTTED FUNDS AND HOW THE STATE PLANS TO BUILD ON ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURES FROM PRIOR FISCAL YEARS.**

### **\* Youth Advisory Board**

Arkansas' Independent Living Grant Program is developing the guidelines, requirements, duties and functions of a Youth Advisory Board to be initiated later this year. It is planned for this board to have an active role in the design and scope of programs and services offered to Independent Living foster teens. It is felt that youth should have viable input into their case plans and services offered to them to achieve their goal of self-sufficiency. Youth from all DCFS Areas of the state will be represented and be encouraged to participate.

### **\* Independent Living Program State Coordinator**

Continue the State Coordinator position who will be responsible for coordinating ILP services state-wide.

### **\* Independent Living Program Area Coordinators**

Continue with the full-time coordinator position for Area VI and hire a second coordinator due to the area's large foster care youth population of approximately 100 youth age 16 and up and an additional 70 youth age 14-15 who are invited to attend life-skills training sessions .

Continue the full-time coordinator position for Area I. This area's population currently exceeds 55 youth age 16 and older and an additional 30 youth age 14-15.

The Area I and VI coordinators' duties will include: life-skills assessments of foster teens age 16 and older, completing IL transition plans for each area's eligible youth; organizing and conducting life skills training; coordinating placement of youth into transitional living residences; acting as liaison between foster care youth, DCFS staff, foster parents, foster care providers and other community professionals, developing community resources, developing mentoring resources and programs and serving as the area clearinghouse person for all activities and expenditures relating to ILP teens.

The grant program plans to continue assisting with Independent Living related travel and expenses for the additional 14 IL coordinators in Areas II, III, IV,V,VII, VIII, IX and X that are now providing IL services in those areas. Expenses related to duties other than Independent Living will be charged to the appropriate county/area office.

### **\*Secretary**

Utilize a secretarial/administrative assistant position, to assist with the coordination of statewide program services including the annual Teen Conference, training sessions and other events, maintaining IL records/files, editing the ILP newsletter, overseeing volunteer clerks, tracking budgeted expenditures and monitoring the ILP library resources.

### **\*Teen Conference**

The Eleventh Annual Teen Conference was held June 5-8, 2000. Arkansas' ILP coordinated and presented the conference instead of using ILP funds to contract for this service. There were 113 attendees for this conference. The Twelfth Annual Conference is planned for June 4-9, 2001 as two back-to-back three-day conferences to accommodate more IL foster teens and expand the life skills venue.

### **\*ILP Funding Assistance**

Continue to assist foster care youth with purchasing items relating to pursuing their goal of being self sufficient, independent adults in society. This will include assistance with tuition, books and related educational expenses, job clothing and tools. Apartment/dorm start-up items will be provided, if needed, for teens, age 18-21, who are continuing to pursue their educational goals.

### **\*Post Discharge Services**

Post discharge services will be available to current and former foster care youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty one (18-21) who were in foster care after their sixteenth (16th) birthday. These services include continued life-skills training in the areas of employment search, educational planning, interpersonal skills, and communications. Assistance will be offered in obtaining grants and other funding to cover educational costs, housing and counseling/tutoring services. Mentoring resources will continue to be developed and offered to this age group. Services will also be offered to qualified adoptees.

### **\*Life Skills Training**

The Program plans to increase the number of youth receiving life-skills training through the following methods: area life skills training sessions, planning and coordination with area family service workers and foster parents, active use of the program's library resources the annual teen conference and development of mentoring resources.

### **\*Community Resources**

The ILP will continue it's efforts to involve community resources such as: financial institutions, high schools and higher educational institutions, professional and volunteer organizations to provide ILP services and basic life-skills training..

### **III. STATEWIDE SERVICES**

The Department of Human Services Division of Children and Family Services is divided statewide into ten (10) service areas. There is at least one Independent Living Coordinator in each of the ten areas to coordinate grant services to the foster teens in the area. Only the area VI coordinator is paid directly from the grant. There is a monthly statewide meeting of all coordinators to discuss problems, solutions, plans, policy, procedure and integration of services across the delivery spectrum. The program currently utilizes DCFS caseworkers, foster parents, foster care providers, and community professionals to offer life skills training state wide. A large amount of life skills training is currently provided on an individual basis by using the program's library training resources. The ILP library contains video tapes, workbooks, and games covering all of the topics addressed in the ILP case plans.

### **IV. PROVISION OF AGE-APPROPRIATE AND EXPERIENCE-RELATED TRAINING AND SERVICES**

It is recognized that life-skills training for youth must be provided in accordance with their age and experience levels. Intake assessments for basic life-skills are done at age 14 at no cost to the grant program to determine general life-skills training needs and again at age 16 when they reach IL eligibility age to determine more specific training needs and to develop the transitional case-plan that is made part of the permanent case-plan. Life-skills trainings are generally designed to fit the age group that attends a particular session and teens that are 18 or older are trained in much more detail and often in one-on-one sessions to fill gaps left from more general trainings in group settings. Teens age 16 or older are assessed at six-month intervals to determine progress towards skills and knowledge acquisition as outlined in their transition plan.

### **V. PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT**

Arkansas Independent Living will continue to develop a state/area/county/city resource base of individuals, institutions, corporations, educational facilities, funding sources, and other interested parties that can fill needs that the agency cannot meet. From providing transportation to mentoring, partnerships are being explored and developed with public and private resources to help the agency provide services and to help the teens reach their goals. Resources information will be maintained within the CHRIS computer information system. Information concerning services, locations and personnel will also be included on the Department of Human Services website, DHS GOLD.

### **VI. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR BENEFITS AND SERVICES**

Arkansas will continue to use the following criteria for determining a youth's eligibility for benefits and services under the Independent Living Grant Program: The youth must:

1. Currently be in foster care or was formerly in foster care upon their 16th birthday or before their 18th birthday.
2. Currently be between the ages of 16-21.
3. Have been initially assessed for basic life-skills knowledge and practice and a transitional plan completed and entered into the case record.
4. Have a case-plan goal of independence or adoption
5. Be actively engaged in an educational program such as high school, GED or post-secondary education.
6. If age 18 or over, has agreed to remain in foster care to continue their eligibility for Independent Living Grant Program services.

## **VII. FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT OF BENEFIT RECIPIENTS**

All programs and services are equally available to all Children and Family Service areas through Independent Living Coordinators assigned to each of the ten (10) service areas. As long as funds are available, services and benefits may be requested, arranged for and received for any eligible foster teen in any area at any time. The Department of Human Services and the Division of Children and Family Services fully complies with agency policy concerning Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act.

## **VIII. TRAINING**

The Division of Children and Family Services is providing an ever-expanding training curriculum for foster parents, adoptive parents, group home workers and case managers addressing issues concerning teens preparing for independent living. Trainings and workshops are held in all service areas, as well as statewide, on a regular basis in order to develop a better understanding of the transitional process for teens and to offer methods and means to assist the adults listed above in dealing with those teens in the process. Training for foster parents and others will be provided by Mid-South Training Academy and DCFS Professional Development and paid for through Title IV-E training funds. The training curriculum will be addressed in the State Plan.

## **IX. ASSURANCES**

A. Section 477 ILP funds will supplement and not replace (1) Title IV-E foster care funds available for maintenance payments and administrative and training costs; and (2) any other state funds which may be available for independent living activities and services (section 477 (e) (3));

B. The program will be operated in an effective and efficient manner (section 477(c));

C. Funds will be used only for the specific purposes in section 477 (section 477 (f)(1));

D. Payments made and services provided to participants in the ILP as a direct consequence of their participation in the ILP will not be considered as income or resources for purposes of determining eligibility for aid under the State's Title IV-A or Title IV-E plan or for determining the level of such aid(section 477(h));

E. Each participant will be provided a written transitional independent living plan which will be based on an assessment of his or her needs and which will be incorporated into his or her case plan as described in section 475(1), (section 477(d) (6));

F. Where appropriate, for youth age 16 or over, the case plan must include a written description of the programs and services which will help the youth prepare for the transition from foster care to independent living (section 475(1));

G. For youth age 16 or over, the dispositional hearing must address the services needed to assist the youth to make the transition from foster care to independent living (section 475(5));

H. Payments to the State will be used for the purpose of conducting activities and providing services to carry out the programs involved directly or under contracts with local governmental entities or private non-profit organizations (section 477 (b));

I. Funds will be administered in compliance with Departmental regulations and policies governing the administration of grants, 45 CFR Parts 92 and 74 and OMB Circulars A-87, A-102, and A-122, including such provisions as Audits (OMB Circulars A-128 and A-133) and Nondiscrimination (45 CFR Part 80);

**X. ELECTIONS THAT THE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM WILL OBSERVE**

A. Currently Arkansas' Independent Living Program has elected to provide and is providing independent living services for non-eligible Title IV-E adolescents. These youth receive all services.

B. The program has elected to provide services to former foster care youth up to the age of twenty-one (21) and these services are part of the existing state-wide plan. Services are provided to teens upon exiting foster care and if requested by the youth. Assistance concerning job placement, educational information and aid, community resources and other available services are provided to eligible former foster care youth.

**FY 2000  
CFCIP Funds Requested**

Federal Funds Requested                      \$ 500,000

State Match Amount                              \$ 100,000

Sources:

Donations

Time and Expenses of Volunteers

State funds used for IL teens' board payments

**Estimated Expenditures of FY2000 CFCIP Funds**

Amount of Federal Funds to be Used for Room and Board                      \$ Up to \$150,000

Salaries and Matching

    State ILP Coordinator

    Secretary

    Area I Coordinator

    Area II Coordinator

    Area VI Coordinators (2)

145,000

Teen Conference 2001

21,000

ILP Staff Training

16,000

Direct Funding Assistance for Teens and Program Maintenance

118,000

Indirect and Allocated Cost

50,000

Total

500,000